

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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TAGS: SOPN, MPOL, KS, US

SUBJECT: KOREAN PRESS REACTION TO PRM-10

REF: STATE 213880

SUMMARY: YESTERDAY'S EVANS AND NOVAK COLUMN GETS TOP PRESS PLAY IN KOREA TODAY, WITH ONE ANALYSIS SPECULATING THAT LEAK OF PARTS OF PRM-10 MAY BE DESIGNED TO AFFECT DISPOSITION OF PAK TONG-SON CASE. END SUMMARY.

1. BOTH VERNACULAR MORNING DAILIES SEPTEMBER 8 GAVE TOP COVERAGE TO STORIES FROM THEIR WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENTS ABOUT EVANS AND NOVAK COLUMN ON PRESIDENTIAL REVIEW MEMORANDUM TEN (PRM-10) WHICH APPEARED IN WASHINGTON POST SEPTEMBER7. ACCORDING TO ARTICLES, THIS COLUMN, ENTITLED "PRM-10 AND THE U.S. WITHDRAWAL", REVEALED THAT THE WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. TROOPS FROM KOREA WOULD PROVIDE U.S. "FLEXIBILITY" IN DECIDING WHETHER TO BECOME INVOLVED IN CASE OF AN ATTACK BY NORTH KOREA: "AFTER THE WITH-

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DRAWAL, THE DANGER OF AUTOMATIC INVOLVEMENT WOULD BE MINIMIZED." COLUMN POINTED OUT THAT THIS CONTRADICTS FPRESIDENT CARTER'S PLEDGE NOT TO DEGRADE THE U.S. COMMITMENT TO KOREA AND ALSO DAMAGES PRESENT DEFENSE PLANS, WHICH ARE BASED ON THE DEFENSE OF SEOUL. COLUMN SAYS THAT KOREA IS THUS PLACED IN A DILEMMA AS TO WHAT TO BELIEVE: THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS OF U.S. LEADERS

OR THE SECRET DOCUMENTS PREPARED BY THEIR PROFESSIONAL ADVISORS.

2. COVERAGE IN NATIONALISTIC CHOSON ILBO WAS LIMITED TO ONE BRIEF STORY ALONG ABOVE LINES, BUT HAN'GUK ILBO RAN MORE DETAILED STORY, TOGETHER WITH THREE COMPANION PIECES. FIRST OF THESE REPORTED THAT DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN HODDING CARTER CITED COMMON PRACTICE OF REFUSING TO COMMENT ON AN INTERNAL DOCUMENT UNDER DISCUSSION WITHIN USG AND ADDED THAT CARTER HAD NOTED THERE WAS NO CHANGE IN U.S. COMMITMENT TO DEFEND AND SUPPORT ROK UNDER DEFENSE TREATY. RELATED ARTICLE ON PAGE TWO GIVES DETAILED SUMMARY OF EVANS-NOVAK COLUMN.

3. MOST SIGNIFICANT IS FRONT-PAGE COMMENTARY IN HAN'GUK ILBO, ATTRIBUTED TO WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT CHO SUN-HWAN. FIRST PART OF ANALYSIS NOTES STRONG EMPHASIS IN PRM-10 ON U.S. INTENTION NOT RPT NOT TO BE DRAWN INTO ASIAN LAND WAR AND ASSERTS THERE NEED BE NO GREAT PROBLEM WITH PRM-10, WHEN ONE NOTES IT IS BASED ON ASSUMPTION OF WORLD WAR, AND HAS NO RELATION TO SORT OF LIMITED WAR WHICH MIGHT OCCUR IN KOREAN PENINSULA. LATTER HALF OF COMMENT, HOWEVER, NOTING THAT EVANS-NOVAK COLUMN IN PAST HAS BEEN SHARPLY CRITICAL OF CARTER ADMINISTRATION, GOES ON TO SPECULATE WHY AND HOW PRM-10 GOT OUT. NOTING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAT PREVIOUS EVANS-NOVAK REPORT THAT PRM-10 ENVISAGED POSSIBLE LOSS OF ONE-THIRD OF GERMANY IN EVENT OF SOVIET ATTACK HAD BEEN EVALUATED BY NEW YORK TIMES AS LEADING TO THREE-PERCENT INCREASE IN U.S. DEFENSE BUDGET AND NEW POLICY TO STRENGTHEN CONVENTIONAL U.S. FORCES. ANALYST SPECULATES THAT INTENTIONAL LEAK OF MATERIAL ON KOREA IN PRM-10, "WHICH WILL SURPRISE AND SCARE KOREAN GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AND ENCOURAGE THE NORTHERN PUPPETS," MAY REFLECT INTENT TO AFFECT DISPOSITION OF PAK TONG-SON CASE.

4. EMBASSY CONTACTS HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO EXPRESS CONCERN TO EMBOFFS ABOUT EFFECTS OF NEWS STORIES BASED ON EVANS AND NOVAK. PROFESSOR YI YONG-HO TOLD EMBOFF SEPT 8 THAT A NUMBER OF HIS COLLEAGUES HAD EXPRESSED CONCERN AND CONFUSION ABOUT IMPLICATIONS OF STORIES TO EFFECT US WAS RESTUDYING THIS DEFENSE LINE IN ASIA. HE URGED THAT USG CLARIFY NATURE OF PRM PROCESS. EMBASSY HAS ALREADY DONE THIS INDIRECTLY, PROVIDING EXPLANATION TO MOFA OFFICIAL AT TIME OF LAST EVANS AND NOVAK ARTICLE. MOFA THEN PROVIDED THIS EXPLANATION TO ROK PRESS. FURTHER EXPLANATORY EFFORT MAY NOW BEEN NECESSARY HOWEVER. IN VIEW OF ROK

INCLINATION TO IDENTIFY PRM TEN OPTIONS WITH US
DECISIONS PRIOR TO US WITHDRAWAL FROM KOREA JUST
BEFORE KOREAN WAR, DEPARTMENT MAY ALSO WISH TO
MAKE SPECIAL EFFORT TO EXPLAIN PRM PROCESS TO KOREAN
CORRESPONDENTS IN WASHINGTON.

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Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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